

THE COMMUNITY CENTER FOR TELEVISION PRODUCTION

164 Court Street
Binghamton, New York 13901
(607) 723-9509

Ralph Hocking, Director
Ken Dominick, Coordinator

The Community Center for Television Production is a media access organization working in conjunction with the Experimental Television Center, State University of New York at Binghamton. We are funded by the New York State Council on the Arts and are cooperating with WSKG TV Channel 46, Binghamton. The Center gives the people of the Triple Cities area access to portable videotape television equipment. This means that individuals and groups in this area may produce television. For example, a high school student interested in the creative potential of TV can spend time at the Center working with video artists. A citizens' group trying to communicate and reinforce a political position or opinion can further its distribution of information through the Center. A governmental department trying to communicate more effectively with the community by giving specific answers to questions is welcome. Anyone who just wants to experiment with TV can use what we have to discover what he can do with television.

The Center is based on the following ideas:

ACCESS. Access to communications media (TV, radio, etc.) should not be as restrictive as it is. People should have more to do with TV than just saying what they do and don't like about it. It would be better if people actually made and used TV in ways that reflected their own thinking. People can organize their experience, define, and learn by making 1/2" videotape TV. Videotape can be as common as pencils and paper. Statements can be made quickly with a minimum of intermediate steps. The overall power of a statement or view is increased through the use of video because it directly involves processes of perceptions as well as thinking. Instead of thinking primarily in terms of writing and speaking, people can start thinking in terms of video. We can start organizing our thoughts in terms of video. We can communicate better across boundaries of literacy, age, and background by using video in addition to the printed word. Decentralization of the television medium is a must if a community is to have a "voice" that mirrors its diversity and varying opinions. This is so because TV is a major communication tool. The control of TV cannot stay in the hands of a few networks but must be dispersed throughout the community so a diverse community "voice" is formed. Imagine, for a moment, a community where only a few have access to paper and writing tools. A community where only a few have access to TV is just as intolerable. TV literacy is necessary.

COMMUNITY AS STUDIO. The community can become a studio because one-half inch videotape equipment is portable, easy to operate, and relatively inexpensive. Having the community as studio is possible because with 1/2" you don't need a place that's all set up with special lighting and technical staffs who operate and care for the hardware. The result is that TV made along those lines will get across more about real people in actual community situations rather than media personalities and the finer points of studio TV production. People produce TV themselves and as a result actual viewpoints come across. Dispersing TV production capability throughout a community is holding a mirror up to the community so it can see itself. Through it, communication takes place. Just as mirrors used daily in bathrooms and in cars show something that otherwise wouldn't be easily visible, so 1/2" video is used to show the individuals the community. All these viewpoints reveal the character and the potential for growth and change. A community is made of people. The buildings, the money, the cars, and all the other hardware are a supportive technology that may get a community going but cannot sustain it apart from the people. The people are the community. For now, people can tape and play back at the Center and in that way show what they think and how they see things. A collection of tapes is developing now; from it people can decide what they want to see. We want more direct communication. That means communication that is not sifted by established TV so only the high points--excitement--are available.

Besides providing 1/2" videotape equipment for people making their own television, the "Community Center for Television Production" will be a center for talking about what is being made. In this sense, the Center is more than an organization providing hardware. It is also a center for TV education and study. Noted TV artists will come and work with the medium, and people will be encouraged to explore. Because of this, it is also an experimental television center. This will make learning about TV a wider experience with better results.